HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Tuesday, December 19, 2017 | *HoustonChronicle.com and Chron.com* | *Vol. 117, No. 67* | *$2.00* ★★★ *Chance of storms, High 75, Low 58*

CITY | STATE

Doctors warn: 'Tis the season for dealing with the flu

Early signs and sounds — sniffles, snuffles and snorts — portend a potentially ferocious flu season here, physicians and public health officials say. **Page A3**

BUSINESS

Michael Wyke

DHL lead driver Scott Patterson scans in packages.

DHL hustles as shopping bustles

The Monday before Christmas is the busiest delivery day for couriers, and DHL, which specializes in international shipments, expected a 60 percent increase in package deliveries. **Page B1**

NATION

Trump warns of rivalry with Russia, China

While presenting a new national security strategy, President Trump declares that the U.S. faces growing competition from Russia and China. **Page A7**

Federal judge resigns over allegations

Federal Judge Alex Kozinski resigns after being accused of sexual misconduct. **Page A10**

Conservatives tout Cruz tax break

Measure that could aid those who opt for school choice called 'game changer'

By Kevin Diaz

WASHINGTON — With the Republican-led Congress heading toward final passage of major tax cut legislation decried by Democrats, Texas U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz has begun campaigning on a school choice provision in the bill that gives tax breaks to families that home-school or send their children to private or religious schools.

In recent weeks since the Texas Republican narrowly secured his "Student Opportunity Amendment" in the GOP tax bill — with an assist from Vice President Mike Pence, who cast the tie-breaking vote — Cruz's 2018 Senate campaign has been heralding the measure to a key Texas constituency: religious conservatives.

In a soaring campaign-style video and a series of email testimonials, Cruz and his backers have described the measure as a turning point in the conservative struggle to allow public funds to open the doors of private schools.

Inside

» *Corker questions provision added to tax bill that likely would benefit him, Trump.* **Page A7**

In an email to supporters last week — the latest of at least four this month — the Cruz campaign highlighted a recent opinion piece by Drew White, a senior policy analyst for the conservative Texas Public Policy Foundation, calling the Cruz measure a "game changer."

The amendment would

Cruz continues on A8

Train's initial run ends in tragedy

Associated Press

Cars from an Amtrak train that derailed lie spilled onto Interstate 5 on Monday in DuPont, Wash. The train, making its first-ever run along a faster new route, hurtled off the overpass, killing at least three.

By Kirk Johnson, Richard Pérez-Peña and Niraj Chokshi
NEW YORK TIMES

DUPONT, Wash. — A passenger train on a newly opened high-speed Amtrak route jumped the tracks on an overpass south of Tacoma on Monday, slamming rail cars into a busy highway, killing at least three people and injuring more than 100 others, officials said.

The derailment of Amtrak Train No. 501, making the inaugural run of a new service from Seattle to Portland, dropped a 132-ton locomotive in the southbound lanes of the Northwest's busiest travel corridor. Two passenger coaches also fell partly in the traffic lanes, and two other coaches were left dangling off the bridge, one of them wedged against a tractor-trailer. On the highway below lay seven crumpled cars and trucks, and huge chunks of concrete that were ripped away from the damaged overpass.

All 12 of the train's coaches and one of its two engines derailed. The National Transportation Safety Board dispatched an investigative team to the scene.

Amtrak continues on A8

Investigators sent to learn whether speed was a factor in derailment on busy Washington state highway

Inside

» *A list of recent Amtrak derailments.* **Page A8**

Man gets 16 years for aid to ISIS

Defense lawyer faults isolation from society

By Gabrielle Banks

Omar Faraj Saeed Al Hardan admitted he associated with jihadis, swore an oath to Islamic State terrorists, lied on a passport application and stockpiled materials to make remote detonators at his west Houston apartment. And he discussed decapitating Americans for the cause.

Al Hardan

But he drew the line at bombs.

"I am not a bombmaker," the defendant told a federal judge. "I have no experience with electronics."

U.S. District Judge Lynn N. Hughes said it was his intent, and not his skillset, that qualified the Iraqi-born refugee for 16 years in prison. The judge explained the sentence was for "what you planned and attempted to do, however inept you may have been at executing that plan."

"Clumsy bombmakers, stupid planners have killed a lot of people," the judge added.

Assistant U.S. Attorney

Palestinian continues on A9

Anxious parents find it's not easy to get their hands on Fingerlings

Internet helps hunt for 'it' toy; scalpers don't

By Katherine Blunt

Jennifer Jordan refused to be outmaneuvered in the ruthless holiday hunt for Fingerlings, clingy robotic monkeys that millions of children suddenly want wrapped around their fingers.

The Houston real estate broker routed in-stock alerts to her cellphone and kept watch for notifications that retailers had received shipments of this season's must-have toy. As the purchasing window narrowed, Jordan went online after every alert, only to find that the virtual shelves had emptied as fast as they had filled.

The breakthrough came on Black Friday, when Amazon released batches of Fingerlings every couple of hours. She pounced as her screen lit up, scoring two for her young son.

Stores continues on A9

Fingerlings are among the top sellers in children's toys this holiday season, disappearing almost as soon as they hit store shelves.

Leslie Plaza Johnson

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